

## **Utah Mine Safety Commission Meeting Minutes**

Monday, August 27, 2007

Electronic Meeting

Anchor Location: Utah Division of Oil, Gas & Mining

1594 West North Temple, Room 1010 – 11:00 a.m.

### **Welcome by Governor Huntsman**

The Governor thanked commission members and expressed his gratitude to them. Governor Huntsman made the following points:

- The commission should focus on worker safety and the continued economic vitality of the coal mining industry and how those two are balanced.
- The commission has the responsibility of recruiting a volunteer technical advisory committee.
- The commission should conduct public hearings in Huntington and Price
- As it relates to this undertaking: the commission should examine how the state can assure itself that MSHA and the Mining Companies are doing everything reasonably possible to ensure the safety of Utah miners, their families, and their communities.

The Commission should focus on the following Subcategories:

1. The inspection process
2. Accident prevention
3. Accident response

These three areas are somewhat deficient in the current model; we need to review them in terms of the appropriate state roll going forward. The commission should issue a preliminary report sometime this fall. There could be important suggestions or recommendations and the Governor's office would need some time to review the recommendations and prepare for the legislative session.

There will be a community gathering on Saturday, September 15, that will focus on bringing our communities and remembering hero's.

### **Greetings by Scott M. Matheson, Jr.**

Scott Matheson Greeted the press, the public, and members of the commission.

### **Roll Call:**

Scott M. Matheson, Jr., Chair

John R. Baza, Executive Secretary

Dennis O'Dell, Head of Mine Safety for United Mine Workers Union

Senator Mike Dmitrich, Utah State Senate

Former U.S Senator Jake Garn

Mayor Hilary Gordon, Huntington City, Utah

David Litvin, President of Utah Mining Association

Representative Kay McIff, Utah House of REpresentative

Mayor Joe Piccolo, Price, Utah

Julie Carter, Administrative Secretary, Oil, Gas and Mining  
Steve Alder, Assistant Attorney General representing Oil, Gas and Mining  
Jim Springer, PIO, Oil, Gas and Mining  
Mary Ann Wright, Associate Director, Mining - Oil, Gas and Mining  
Paul Foy, Associated Press  
Lisa Roche, Deseret Morning News  
Bill Tempowski, Channel 4  
Jay, KSL T.V.  
Courtney Orton, KSL  
Paul Nelson, KSL Radio  
Patty Hennessey, Salt Lake Tribune  
Amanda Smith, Governor's office  
Mike Mower, Governor's office  
John Rupple, Public Lands Policy Coordination  
Laura Alton, Office of Planning and Budget

## **AGENDA**

### **1. Authorization of Electronic Meeting**

John Baza read a resolution authorizing the Commission to conduct an electronic meeting. A motion was made to adopt the resolution, seconded, and passed by unanimous vote.

### **2. Preliminary Organizational Matters**

Scott Matheson, Jr. led a discussion of organizational matters for the Commission.

The Governor has set forth an outline to begin discussion:

- The commission is anticipated to have public meetings in Price and Huntington, As well as other locations deemed appropriate.
- The commission will benefit from, and need, technical assistance. The commission is tasked to establish a technical advisory group.

The Governor has made it clear that this commission is to address a variety of issues arising out of the recent and continuing disaster at the Crandal Canyon mine including the role of the State of Utah in addressing mine safety, and accident prevention and accident response. There will be other investigations at the congressional level, MSHA, and other reviews not yet announced. This commission will operate in the context of an investigatory environment. Our focus is to be on the State's roll in mine safety and accident prevention.

### **3. Discussion of Scope of Project**

A group discussion yielded the following points:

- In considering mine safety records, take in to account the size of mining operations when making comparisons.
- If we recommend the institution of a state agency for mine worker safety what will it enforce?

- Historically, the state had a roll in mine safety enforcement, why did that change?
- Communications inside the mine haven't changed in years. Tracking devices are still under development. The commission should look at all resources available to increase mine worker safety.
- It's important to bring a local perspective to the national picture and come up with a solution that helps nationally, and particularly improves safety in the state.
- May be a difference in size of regulatory effort needed depending on the size of operations in Utah.
- Consider social and economic aspects of the community.
- Identify significant differences and similarities between States. They have an office of mine worker safety
- Focus early on common sense recommendations such as:
  - Communication
  - Tracking
  - Breathing
  - Rescue
- Use West Virginia, Kentucky, and other states as a resource. We may want to look at programs they have in place.
- Develop and inventory of our 13 mines, and mining and safety practices employed, and mining plans to compare safety levels. Look at the State roll in these areas. **John Baza to compile.**
- Inventory of the things that the state does do, even in a collateral way, regarding issues of mine safety, rescue recovery, and accident response. Determine which agencies are involved, and what kind of coordinating roll is provided. To develop a baseline from which to assess what an appropriate State roll might be in the future, we need to know what that roll is now. **John Baza is tasked to compile this information. David Litvin offered to assist.**
- Commission members are invited to attend MSHA's legislative briefing at the State Capitol on Wednesday, August 29, for information gathering purposes.
- Look at which states have enforcement authority, and which do not. Do a comparative analysis of current safety practices. Do states with enforcement authority have better safety records?

#### 4. **Scheduling Issues**

The commission should give miners an opportunity for input; we should have discussions with the families. At some point the commission will conduct hearings in Price, Huntington, and Salt Lake.

The next commission meeting will be held at 10:00 am on September 10, 2007, at the Western Technical Training Center in Price, Utah.

#### 5. **Other Business**

Establish working relationships with MSHA, the congressional committee, and other agencies for access to reports and other records. It is critical to have information

sharing. The Utah Geological Survey has information on coal. John will visit with them and ask for their assistance.

Scott Matheson will prepare a draft agenda for the next meeting.

Joe Piccolo offered to help set up the next meeting.